

March 1, 2010

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Posted: October 6, 2009 10:10 AM

"Why I Support the National Equality March": NFL's Scott Fujita Speaks Out for Gay Rights

Scott Fujita is a star linebacker for the unbeaten New Orleans Saints. He is also a 2001 graduate from the University of California at Berkeley with a BA in political science. In addition to playing for the Saints, he is also someone proudly raising his family in post-Katrina New Orleans. In the following interview, Scott speaks out about why he is supporting the October 11th National Equality March for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights in Washington DC.

Dave Zirin: Scott, you made the decision to lend your name and endorse the National Equality March. Why did you choose to do that?

Scott Fujita: I think for me it was a cause that I truly believe in. By in large in this country the issue of gay rights and equality should be past the point of debate. Really, there should be no debate anymore. For me, in my small platform as a professional football player, I understand that my time in the spotlight is probably limited. The more times you have to lend your name to a cause you believe in, you should do that.

DZ: You've said to me in previous discussions that one of the reasons why this issue really resonates with you is because of the issue of adoption, and who gets to adopt children in the United States. Can you speak about that?

SF: A year ago or two years ago, I remember reading about an initiative that was proposed in the state of Arkansas. It was some kind of measure that was aimed at preventing adoptions by single parents. Now, the way I read that and the way that I translated that language was that only heterosexual, married couples could adopt children. As an adopted child that really bothered me. I asked myself, what that is really saying is that the concern with one's sexual orientation or one's sexual preference outweighs what's really important, and that's finding safe homes for children, for our children. It's also saying that we'd rather have kids bounce around from foster home to foster home throughout the course of their childhood, than end up in a permanent home, where the parent, whether that person's single or not, gay or straight. Either way, it doesn't matter. It's a home that's going to be provided for a kid who desperately needs a home. As an adopted child, that measure really bothered me. It just boggles my mind because good, loving homes for any child are the most important thing.

DZ: Now Scott, what makes your stance newsworthy is that people don't really think of the National Football League as a gay friendly place. How present is homophobia in the locker room on a day in and day out basis?

SF: You know people do call it homophobia, and even that term alone is interesting to me. Because I don't even know how they call it homophobia, because that's a fear of the same. It's more heterophobia. It's a fear of something different from yourself. Is there still some of that in the locker room? Absolutely. People tell me, hey, that's pretty courageous. You come out in favor of gay rights. I don't think it's that courageous. I think I have an opinion, that I wish was shared by everybody, but I honestly believe that it's shared by more [football players] than we know because a lot of people just won't speak out about it. I'm hoping that what [Baltimore Ravens linebacker] Brendon [Ayanbadejo] did, and things like what I'm doing, speaking out a little bit, hopefully more people will step up and acknowledge the fact that hey, it's ok to talk about this. Just because I'm in favor of gay rights doesn't mean that I'm gay or doesn't mean I'm some kind of "sissy" or something. That's the language that you hear in locker rooms. I know these guys well. I know for the most part, guys are a lot more tolerant than they get credit for but they're not comfortable yet speaking out about it. It's going to come in time. By in large, it's an opinion that's shared by more people than are realized. I just wish it was shared by everybody.

DZ: Do you have any concerns that teammates, fans, people will say Scott Fujita may be married and have kids, but maybe on the down low he might really be gay? Do you have concern that teammates, bloggers, the press will talk that kind of smack about you either behind your back or to your face?

SF: No, I have no concern about that whatsoever. I know who I am. My wife knows who I am. I don't care one way or the other Dave. I imagine that when some of this gets out guys in the locker room might give me a hard time, and they always give me a hard time. They call me the Pinko Communist Fag from Berkeley. I'm used to it. I can take it all.

DZ: You made an interesting comment to me off air about the utter illogic of people who claim to promote God and Jesus but stand four square against any kind of national equality. Can you speak about that please?

SF: I completely respect everyone's choice of religion. Just because I'm not a very religious guy doesn't make me right or wrong, or them right or wrong. Everybody has a right to believe in whatever they want. But, I don't like when people use God or Jesus Christ in this whole debate, if you could even call it a debate. Jesus Christ to me, is probably the most compassionate and revolutionary thinker of all time. Look at his teachings. Look at what he preached. He would not endorse any type of inequality, this type of inhumanity. He would not be on board with that. So please, spare me that argument and saying that hey, the Bible says that it ain't right, or hey, Jesus Christ wouldn't buy into this kind of thing. Don't give me that. That's not even an argument.

DZ: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

SF: I'm excited about this. You know what Brandon did was great. What he wrote in the Huffington Post was very well said. I'm glad he did it. I know people are applauding him right now for being so courageous. It's courageous to a certain extent, but it's just an opinion. I wish more people shared the opinion that he and I have. Like I said, I think more people do than we realize. I just wish more people would be as open as we have been about it. I always describe myself as a pretty open minded and tolerant guy. But the one thing I am most intolerant of is intolerance. That's the one thing, you want to get under my skin, to start talking about some intolerant stuff, and I'm quick to talk about it.

DZ: Oh, if that's the case, then we should just expect you guys to beat the Redskins forty two to nothing when you're in town. The Redskins name will get you all riled up and you'll have 20 tackles right?

SF: (Laughs) Now you're trying to get me in trouble.

[Dave Zirin is the author of "A People's History of Sports in the United States" (The New Press) Receive his column every week by emailing dave@edgeofsports.com. Contact him at edgeofsports@gmail.com.]

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